

INSIDE TODAY
WORLD NEWS
TRAIN DELAYS

People seen at St. Pancras Station in London, Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009.

Read more on Page A6

SPORTS NEWS**AMERICAN 1ST**

Tim Burke from the U.S. competes during the men 12.5 km pursuit, at the biathlon World Cup event in Pokljuka, Slovenia, Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009.

Read more on Page A12



Price of a barrel of petroleum
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National Park Service employee Phillip Bradley clears snow at the Lincoln Memorial with the Washington Monument in the background Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009, in Washington. A slow-moving storm blanketed swaths of the mid-Atlantic with nearly 2 feet of snow.

Associated Press

U.S. prison population to have first drop since 1972

JEFF CARLTON

Associated Press Writer

DALLAS (AP) — The United States may soon see its prison population drop for the first time in almost four decades, a milestone in a nation that locks up more people than any other. The inmate population has risen steadily since the early 1970s as states adopted get-tough policies that sent more people to prison and kept them there longer. But tight budgets now have states rethinking

these policies and the costs that come with them.

"It's a reversal of a trend that's been going on for more than a generation," said David Greenberg, a sociology professor at New York University. "In some ways, it's overdue."

The U.S. prison population dropped steadily during most of the 1960s, and there were a few small dips in 1970 and 1972. But it has risen every year since, according to the

Bureau of Justice Statistics.

About 739,000 prisoners were admitted to state and federal facilities last year, about 3,500

more than were released, according to new figures from the bureau.

Continued on Page 3



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U.S. Joint Chiefs Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen speaks to the news media in Baghdad, Iraq, Saturday, Dec. 19, 2009. America's top military officer says there's no evidence that the takeover of an oil well in southern Iraq by Iranian forces is an attempt to influence Iraq's upcoming elections.

Associated Press

Mullen worries about Iran running out clock on U.S.

ANNE GEARAN

AP National Security Writer

ABOARD A U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT

(AP) — The top U.S. military officer said Sunday he does not assume Iran's brief seizure of an Iraqi oil well is part of an orchestrated plan in Tehran to threaten its neighbors.

Adm. Mike Mullen also said he's worried about "the clock now running" on the Obama administration's efforts at trying to keep the lines of communication open with Iran. The administration had given a rough deadline of the end of 2009 for Iran to respond to an offer of engagement and show that it would allay world concerns about its nuclear program.

Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, supports that offer, and has said any military strike on Iran, whether by Israel or the U.S., should be a last resort.

Washington and others worry that Iran's program is intended to develop nuclear weapon. Iran says its work is peaceful and designed to generate electricity but has defied international demands to prove it is not trying to build an atomic bomb.

The administration is now beginning a push to get international support for

additional penalties against Iran as a result, and Mullen suggested he thinks that backing was there.

"I think signals are very clearly in the air that another set of sanctions, another resolution, that that's coming," he said.

"I grow increasingly concerned that the Iranians have been non-responsive. I've said for a long time we don't need another conflict in that part of the world," he said. "I'm not predicting that would happen, but I think they've got to get to a position where they are a constructive force and not a destabilizing force."

The administration is concerned about Iran's refusal to carry through on a tentative deal struck in October that called for Iran to ship the majority of its low-enriched uranium out of the country in exchange for fuel to run a research reactor.

The deal was seen by the U.S. and its negotiating partners as a step toward building confidence in Iran's claim that its nuclear program is designed entirely to generate power, not weapons.

The administration also stepped up the momentum toward sanctions after the revelation in September that Iran was secretly building a second uranium-enrichment

facility near the holy city of Qom.

Mullen, who spoke to reporters while flying from Germany back to the U.S., said the oil well incident adds to his concerns about Iran's intentions toward neighboring Iraq and the rest of the world.

"I worry a great deal about ... Iran and destabilizing as opposed to stabilizing," he said.

"And I worry about, you know, the clock now running on the dialogue and the engagement and sort of, where are we if that doesn't finish well? And certainly recent indications are ... they're not very responsive."

Meanwhile in Washington, senior Obama adviser David Axelrod said time was running out for Iran to cooperate.

"The international community is going to have to deal with that if they don't change their minds," he said. "I think that the world is united and is willing to take additional steps if the Iranians don't turn around. ... Plainly, there are going to be consequences if they don't turn around."

Republican Sen. John McCain said the administration should act on its own to punish Iran and demonstrate support for Iranian dissidents.

"The president should stand up for the people who are demonstrating and risking their very lives on behalf of freedom on the streets of Tehran," he said. "Let's make it very clear we are with these people who are struggling for freedom as we always have."

Axelrod spoke on ABC's "This Week," while McCain appeared on "Fox News Sunday." □

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PRISON POPULATION

Continued from Front Page

The 0.8 percent growth in the prison population is the smallest annual increase this decade and significantly less than the 6.5 percent average annual growth of the 1990s.

Overall, there were 1.6 million prisoners in state and federal prisons at the end of 2008.

In the past, prison populations have been lower when drafts were enacted, including during World War II and the wars in Korea and Vietnam.

"People who go to war are young men, and young men are the most likely to get arrested or prosecuted," said James Austin, president of the JFA Institute, a research organization that advises states on prison issues.

The ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan haven't involved in a draft.

Instead, the economic crisis forced states to reconsider who they put behind bars and how long they kept them there, said Kim English, research director for the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice.

In Texas, parole rates were once among the lowest in the nation, with as few as 15 percent of inmates being granted release as recently as five years ago. Now, the parole rate is more than 30 percent after Texas began identifying low-risk candidates for parole.

In Mississippi, a truth-in-sentencing law required drug offenders to serve 85 percent of their sentences. That's been reduced to less than 25 percent.

California's budget problems are expected to result in the release of 37,000 inmates in the next two years. The state also is under a federal court

order to shed 40,000 inmates because its prisons are so overcrowded that they are no longer constitutional, Austin said.

States also are looking at ways to keep people from ever entering prison. A nationwide system of drug courts takes first-time felony offenders caught with less than a gram of illegal drugs and sets up a monitoring team to help with case management and therapy. Studies have touted significant savings with drug courts, saying they cost 10 percent to 30 percent less than it costs to send someone to prison.

"I don't think they work. I know so," said Judge John Creuzot, a state district judge in Dallas.

The reforms in many state prisons and courts come even as crime rates continue to drop nationwide.



Cells sit empty in the protective custody unit of the Standish Max Correctional Facility Friday, Dec. 18, 2009 in Standish, Mich. Michigan still is in the hunt for federal and out-of-state inmates to fill its shuttered prisons _ just not Guantanamo detainees, Gov. Jennifer Granholm said

Associated Press

"It's economically driven, but the science is there to support it," Austin said. "They are saving money, but not doing it in a way that jeopardizes public safety."

One exception to the trend is Florida, which has enacted

a law requiring all convicts to serve a high percentage of their sentences. The law is straining the state's prison resources.

"They know that they are stuck in a time bomb they can't get out of," Austin said. □

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Health Care bill faces key Senate test vote



Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., speaks at a news conference about the pending health care bill as Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., left, and Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., listen on Capitol Hill in Washington, Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009.

Associated Press

DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Senate Democrats confidently advanced health care legislation

Sunday toward a make-or-break test vote in a push for Christmas-week passage. Republicans vowed to resist what they appeared unable to

stop. In the run-up to the vote, the escalation in rhetoric was remarkable on both sides of an issue that has divided the two political parties for months.

"This process is not legislation. This process is corruption," said Republican Sen. Tom Coburn, referring to the last-minute flurry of dealmaking that enabled Majority Leader Harry Reid and the White House to lock in the 60 votes needed to approve the legislation.

Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island responded in near-Biblical terms. In a speech on the Senate floor, he said Republicans are embarked on a "no-holds barred mission of propaganda, obstruction and fear. ... There will be a reckoning. There will come a day of judgment about who was telling the truth."

Whatever else it was, the legislation represented the culmination of a year's work for Democrats, pressed by President Barack Obama to remake the nation's health care system. The United States is the only wealthy industrialized nation that does not have universal coverage. Health insurance in the U.S. is provided primarily by employers, but the ranks of the uninsured have been growing

due to job losses in the recent recession. Under Senate rules, Democrats needed 60 votes on three separate occasions to pass the measure. The first and most critical test was set for about 1 a.m. Monday. Democrats said Sen. Ben Nelson's announcement Saturday that he would vote for the bill gave them the support they needed. Asked if Republicans could prevent the bill's passage, Republican Sen. John McCain said: "Probably not. But what we can do is continue winning the battle of American public opinion." Democrats said they hoped Republicans would relent in the face of a clear 60-vote majority, but if Republican critics choose to do so, they could delay a final vote on the bill until early Christmas Eve. The House has already passed legislation, and attempts to work out a compromise are expected to begin in the days after Christmas.

At its core, the legislation would create a new insurance exchange where consumers could shop for affordable coverage that complies with new federal guidelines. Most Americans would be required to purchase insurance, with subsidies available to help defray the cost

for lower and middle income individuals and families. New protections would be offered to ensure people don't lose coverage because of health problems.

The Senate legislation is predicted to extend coverage to more than 30 million Americans who lack coverage and would ban industry practices such as denial of insurance on the basis of pre-existing medical conditions. The Congressional Budget Office said it would reduce deficits by about \$132 billion over a decade, and possibly much more in the 10 years that follow.

In a bow to Senate moderates, the measure lacks a government-run insurance option of the type that House Democrats placed in their bill. Instead, the estimated 26 million Americans purchasing coverage through new insurance exchanges would have the option of signing up for privately owned, nonprofit nationwide plans overseen by the same federal agency office that supervises the system used by federal employees and members of Congress.

Nelson won numerous changes, including tougher restrictions on abortion coverage and an estimated \$45 million in federal Medicaid funds, enough to completely cover his state's costs of complying with an expansion of the program mandated by the bill.

Vermont and Massachusetts also won additional Medicaid funds; plastic surgeons were persuasive in their bid to strip out a proposed tax on elective plastic surgery; hospitals in the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana won additional Medicare funds; and there was more money for hospitals in Hawaii to treat the uninsured.

While Nelson's vote was the decisive one to fall into place for the Democrats, only an unpredictable series of events has left them with the ability to gain 60 without any help from Republicans. □

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STORM

Continued from Front Page

The National Weather Service said the storm gave Philadelphia, which began keeping records in 1884, its second-largest snowfall: 23.2 inches. Even more was recorded in the Philadelphia suburb of Medford, New Jersey, at 24 inches.

Around New York City, the brunt of the storm hit Long Island to the east, with whiteout conditions and 26.3 inches of snow in Upton, a record since measurements began in 1949. Nearly 11 inches of snow fell on New York City.

Pragmatic New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg encouraged residents and holiday visitors to take advantage of cancellations by seeing a Broadway show. The mayor said city retailers weren't hard hit because the snow held off until late Saturday.

Bus, subways and trains were delayed — including a Long Island Rail Road train stalled for more than five hours before backing up and unloading its 150 passengers.

Airports in the Northeast that were jammed up Saturday were working their way back to normal operations. About 1,200 flights at the New York City area's three major airports remained canceled despite clear conditions on the runways.



Telescope viewers are covered in snow overlooking Lighthouse Beach Sunday in Chatham, Mass. Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009, during the first major snowstorm of the season.

Associated Press

By Sunday morning, one runway at Dulles International Airport in Washington was open, handling arriving flights, spokeswoman Tara Hamilton said.

Philadelphia International Airport shut down Saturday night but began to reopen early Sunday. Spokeswoman Phyllis Van Istendal said operations would ramp up later in the day.

Merchants feared they'd take a hit as the storm blew through on the last weekend before Christmas. Shoppers who did venture out made the most of it.

James Phyfe, 35, of Cranston, Rhode Island, took advantage of the meager crowds to buy some gifts, including a toy soccer ball, for his toddler son.

"I came out because I knew there'd be no crowds around," he said.

The storm began wreaking misery Friday in South

Florida, where it caused flooding and knocked out electricity in the Carolinas before turning to snow as it moved north.

One person in Virginia was killed in a traffic accident, and authorities said the weather may have contributed to another traffic death there. A third death in Virginia is believed to have been caused by exposure. In Ohio, two people were killed in accidents on snow-covered roads.

Attractions such as the Smithsonian museums in Washington and the Philadelphia Zoo were closed both Saturday and Sunday. □

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Eurostar train services canceled indefinitely



Passengers wait at St Pancras Station in London after delays to the Eurostar train services, Saturday Dec. 19, 2009. The Eurostar train service between Britain and France was suspended Saturday morning after more than 2,000 passengers were stranded for hours after four passenger trains broke down in the Channel Tunnel. Initial reports blamed the breakdowns on wintry weather conditions on both side of the English Channel.

Associated Press

RAPHAEL G. SATTER
Associated Press Writer

LONDON (AP) — The only passenger rail link between Britain and the rest of Europe has been shutdown indefinitely,

Eurostar said, promising more travel misery for thousands of stranded passengers just before Christmas.

A Eurostar statement said the fleet was undergoing upgrades

and that more tests were planned for Monday. But a spokeswoman said she could not guarantee that service would resume Tuesday.

A statement posted to the company's Web site urged passengers to delay their trips or seek refunds.

Services have been suspended since late Friday, when a series of glitches stranded five trains inside the Channel Tunnel and trapped more than 2,000 passengers for hours in stuffy and claustrophobic conditions. More than 55,000 passengers overall have been affected.

Some panicked passengers stayed underground for more than 15 hours without food or water, or any clear idea of what was going on — prompting outrage from travelers and a promise from Eurostar that no passenger train would enter the tunnel until the issue had been identified and fixed.

Eurostar runs services between England, France and Belgium. The company said Sunday it had traced the problem to

“acute weather conditions in northern France,” which has seen its worst winter weather in years.

Eurostar commercial director Nick Mercer said three test trains sent through the Channel Tunnel on Sunday ran successfully, but that it became clear that the especially bad weather meant that snow was being sucked into the trains in a way “that has never happened before.”

“The engineers on board have recommended strongly that, in light of further snowfalls that are happening tonight, we make some modifications to the trains on snow shields to stop snow being ingested into the power car,” he told the BBC. The stoppage has already meant that about 31,000 people in Britain, France and Belgium have had to cancel trips Saturday, and 26,000 more were expected to be affected Sunday. With a huge backlog of passengers still building, Eurostar is blocking any sales until after

Christmas and Eurostar chief executive Richard Brown has warned that services may not be back to normal for days.

For those seeking alternative routes between Paris, Brussels and London, the winter weather was dealing out more bad news.

Nearly half of all flights out of Paris' Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports were cut Sunday through mid-afternoon, with more cancellations forecast for Monday. Belgium was also badly hit, with passengers in Brussels lining up for hours in an effort to rebook flights.

Tourist Paul Dunn, 46, who was stuck in Paris, said he was looking for alternatives but that information was hard to come by.

“We said: ‘Can we get the train to (the French city of) Calais and the ferry?’ They are saying: ‘We don't know what you can do. You can try.’”

It is a measure of the popularity of the 15-year-old Eurostar service — which whisks passengers from London to Paris or Brussels in about two hours — that its closure has dominated news in Britain.

European parliamentarians on both sides of the Channel have criticized the train company as being irresponsible, while Britain's opposition Conservative Party said the issue was a matter of “huge concern.”

Brown seemed to acknowledge that there were some problems, apologizing for the Friday's incident and the ensuing delays, but defended his staff. “I'm not pretending it went well. I think it went quite a bit better than people say,” he told the BBC. □

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Chavez: U.S. spy plane violated Venezuela's airspace

CHRISTOPHER TOOTHAKER

Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — President Hugo Chavez on Sunday accused the U.S. of violating Venezuela's airspace with an unmanned spy plane, and ordered his military to be on alert and shoot down any such aircraft in the future.

Speaking during his weekly television and radio program, Chavez said the aircraft overflowed a Venezuelan military base in the western state of Zulia after taking off from neighboring Colombia. He did not elaborate, but suggested the plane was being used for espionage.

"These are the Yankees. They are entering Venezuela," he said.

"I've ordered them to be shot down," Chavez said of the aircraft.

"We cannot permit this."

Chavez has accused Colombia of allowing the United States to use its military bases to prepare a possible attack against Venezuela.

Both the U.S. and Colombia have denied such allegations in the past, saying the U.S. military presence is for the sole purpose of combating drug trafficking.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Embassy said the mission had no information about any flyover and had not been contacted by Chavez's administration.

"If the Venezuelan government would like to speak with us about any issue, we would welcome discussions because we seek open dialogue with all nations in the hemisphere," spokeswoman Robin Holzhauer said.

It is not uncommon for Chavez to accuse other nations, especially the U.S. and its allies, of conspiring against Venezuela.

Last week, the president accused the Netherlands of letting the U.S. military use Dutch islands off Venezuela's Caribbean coast to prepare for a possible military offensive. The former paratroop commander said the U.S. military has sent intelligence agents, warships and spy planes to Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire, which are self-governing Dutch islands.

The Dutch government rejected the allegations and the country's top diplomat, Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen, has asked Venezuela's ambassador to clarify the claims, Dutch Foreign Ministry spokesman Bart Rijs said.

Rijs said U.S. soldiers do use civilian air fields on Curacao and Aruba, but only for anti-drug trafficking efforts.

Tensions between Venezuela and neighboring Colombia have been tense for months due to Chavez's accusations of warmongering and Colombian President Alvaro



In this photo released by Miraflores Press Office, Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, gestures during his weekly radio and television show "Hello President" in Caracas, Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009. Chavez claims an unmanned U.S. spy plane recently violated the Venezuelan airspace and he's ordered his military to shoot down such aircraft if it happens to fly again over his country's territory.

Associated Press

Uribe's allegations that Venezuela has allowed Colombian rebel leaders to seek refuge there.

Chavez denied on Sunday that his socialist government is protecting

Marxist guerrillas and warned Colombia's military against sending soldiers across the border.

"You'll be sorry," he said. "We are not unarmed." □



Aruba TODAY

Don't drink &
DRIVE

Polish police retrieve damaged Auschwitz gate sign



Tourists pause near the main entrance, with a replica of the inscription “Arbeit Macht Frei” (translated to “Work Sets You Free”) over the entranceway to the former Nazi death camp Auschwitz Birkenau, in Oswiecim, southern Poland, Friday, Dec. 18, 2009. The original infamous iron sign over the main entrance to the former Nazi death camp Auschwitz Birkenau was stolen before dawn on Friday and the police have launched an intensive search, but the symbolic inscription above the entrance has been replaced by a replica sign.

Associated Press

MONIKA SCISLOWSKA

Associated Press Writer

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Polish police found the infamous “Arbeit Macht Frei” sign that was stolen from the gate of the former Nazi death camp of Auschwitz after an intensive three-day hunt and arrested five suspects, police said early Monday. The sign was found cut into three pieces.

Police spokeswoman Katarzyna Padlo told The Associated Press that the sign was found Sunday night in northern Poland, the other end of the country from the southern Polish town where the Auschwitz memorial

museum is located and where it disappeared before dawn Friday.

Padlo said police detained five men between the ages of 25 and 39 and took them for questioning to Krakow, which is the regional command of the area that includes the Auschwitz museum.

Another police spokesman, Dariusz Nowak, said the 16-foot sign, made of hollow steel, was found cut into three pieces, each containing one of the words. The cruelly ironic phrase means “Work Sets You Free” and ran completely counter to the purpose of Auschwitz, which began as a concentration camp for

political prisoners during the Nazi occupation of Poland and evolved into an extermination camp where Jews were gassed to death in factory-like fashion.

The police refused to divulge any details of the circumstances in which the sign was found or to speculate on the motive of the perpetrators. They were expected to disclose more at a news conference in Krakow planned for 3 a.m. EST Monday.

The sign that topped the main gate at the Auschwitz memorial site was stolen early Friday, setting off an international outcry at the disappearance of one of the most chilling and best known

symbols of the Holocaust. State authorities made finding it a priority and appealed to all Poles for assistance.

Museum authorities welcomed the news with huge relief despite the damage done to the sign. Spokesman Pawel Sawicki said conservation experts will have to determine how best to repair it and that the museum authorities hope to restore it to its place as soon as possible.

Sawicki said the museum staff did not yet know who carried out the theft or why and were themselves waiting for more information from police.

More than 1 million people, mostly Jews, but also Gypsies, Poles and others, died in the gas

chambers or from starvation and disease while performing forced labor at Auschwitz, which Nazi Germany built in occupied Poland during World War II. The camp was liberated by the Soviet army on Jan. 27, 1945.

Earlier on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on Poland to act to find “these twisted criminals that desecrated the place where over a million Jews were murdered.”

“The sign is of the deepest historical importance to the Jewish people and the whole world, and is a tombstone for more than a million Jews,” Netanyahu said. □

Quake hits Malawi, killing 3, injuring about 200

RAPHAEL TENTHANI

Associated Press Writer

BLANTYRE, Malawi (AP)

— A strong earthquake has destroyed several buildings in Malawi, killing at least three people and injuring about 200, a government official said.

The quake struck the southeast African country at 1:19 a.m. Sunday, and the victims included students who were sleeping in a dormitory at a government school, said Gasten Macheka, the commissioner of Karonga district.

Macheka said about 270,000 people have been urged to leave their homes for their safety, and that the hard-hit

district in northern Malawi urgently needs at least 48,000 tents and medical supplies.

“This is a crisis,” he said. “We are asking everyone in Karonga not to be in houses or near houses because the situation is unstable. We are appealing to the government and the international community to help us as a matter of urgency.”

Macheka said at least three people were killed and 200 injured. Many of the victims were treated for injuries such as broken bones and skin lacerations at Karonga District Hospital, but dozens of others were hospitalized there or evacuated to a hospital in Mzuzu city, about 140 miles from the epicenter, he said.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake had a magnitude of 6.0, making it strong enough to cause severe damage.

Officials from Malawi’s Department of Relief and Disaster Management Affairs were flying to the area to survey the damage, and the Malawi Red Cross was taking tents from the capital,

Lilongwe, to the displaced in Karonga district.

The district has been hit by a series of earthquakes and aftershocks since the beginning of December.

Leonard Kalindekaffe, the director of Malawi’s Department of Geological Surveys, said Sunday’s quake was worse than any other. However, earlier this month an earthquake nearly as strong — a 5.9-magnitude — demolished several houses in Karonga district, killing a child and injuring six people. Kalindekaffe said the area had been expecting aftershocks, “but we are surprised at the massive one” that hit Sunday. “It’s now really chaotic. We can’t tell what’s going to happen,” he said.

The district lies on the Great Rift Valley fault line, which may now be realigning itself, making it more unstable than it has been for a long time, said Kalindekaffe.

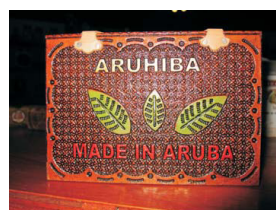
“This is being caused by what we call the rejuvenation of the fault lines, or new faults are being formed,” he said. □

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Petrocchi has always had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crop. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The process took ten years. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the molding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. The cigar box is specially designed for the cigars with the logo “Aruhiba”. Petrocchi considers Aruhiba a promotion for Aruba through fine quality cigars. The company sells International cigars as well. Buy a gift box of Aruhiba Corona with five cigars and you will get 1 FREE cigar of \$35. Located at the Historic Dutch Windmill. Open on Sunday from 9am to 8pm. And also at Tamarijn Hotel open from 9am to 1pm. Aruhiba is only available in above mentioned stores. Visit our authentic tobacco farm where cigars are handmade.



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Astronauts blast off for Christmas space mission

PETER LEONARD

Associated Press Writer

BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan (AP) — A Russian rocket blasted off from a cosmodrome in Kazakhstan lighting up the frigid Central Asian steppe Monday, shuttling an American, a Russian and a Japanese to the International Space Station.

Standing in the early morning cold, the astronauts' family and friends watched as the Soyuz craft soared atop a tower of bright orange flames.

The Soyuz TMA-17's three astronauts will take the orbiting laboratory's permanent crew to five following the early-hours launch, the first-ever blastoff of a Soyuz rocket on a winter night.

Timothy J. Creamer, Soichi Noguchi and Oleg Kotov are to join current inhabitants, American Jeff Williams and

Russian Maxim Surayev, who have been alone on the space station for three weeks.

This was a "spectacular launch, a great Christmas present," NASA spokesman Rob Navias said after space officials confirmed the rocket had entered into orbit. "A great way to finish the year."

A NASA television Webcast showed the crew giving a thumbs up sign as the vessel hurtled skyward.

One minute into the launch, the rocket reached a speed of around 500 meters (1,640 feet) per second.

The Soyuz will travel for about two days before docking with the space station 220 miles (350 kilometers) above Earth. Reporting to Russian space officials prior to the launch, the astronauts seemed calm and relaxed.

Speaking fluent Russian,

Creamer thanked technical staff for their role in preparing for the expedition.

One of the main aims of the expedition will be to deliver a full-fledged module to the space station, complete with a seven-window cupola for prime Earth gazing, Navias said. Striking a festive mood, the space station this week beamed a video Christmas greeting to Earth.

On its Web site, the U.S. space agency NASA has created a series of virtual postcards for members of the public to send to the space station with their holiday greetings.

Creamer, who is making his maiden voyage to space, has promised to keep people back on earth up-to-date via Twitter.

In a message posted from his mobile device just hours before the launch he wrote,



Russian cosmonaut and mission commander Oleg Kotov, left, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Soichi Noguchi, right, two of the three crew members of the mission to the International Space Station (ISS), gesture prior to the launch of the Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian-leased Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, Monday, Dec. 21, 2009.

Associated Press

"Will tweet soonest. Happy & Safe holidays to all!"

Noguchi is heading back to space for his second time and has become the first professional Japanese astronaut to fly aboard the Soyuz. The first space station crew arrived in 2000, two years after the first part was launched. Until this year, no more than three people lived up there at a time, although there

were as many as six people aboard for short periods when a space tourist would go up with one crew, spend a week or so aboard and come back with another crew.

With the U.S. shuttle fleet set to be grounded soon, NASA and other international partners will have to rely on Russian Soyuz spacecraft to ferry their astronauts to the space station and back. □

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'Avatar' blasts off with \$232.2 million worldwide



Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. arrives at the premiere of 'Avatar' in Los Angeles on Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2009.

(AP Photo/Matt Sayles)

By DAVID GERMAIN,
AP Movie Writer

LOS ANGELES — James Cameron launched his science-fiction epic "Avatar" into a safe orbit as the costly film soared to No. 1 with \$73 million domestically and \$159.2 million overseas, for a \$232.2 million worldwide total.

With that big a start, distributor 20th Century Fox was quick to proclaim it made a good investment with the estimated \$400 million spent to make and market the film, which is Cameron's first narrative feature since 1997's "Titanic," the king of modern blockbusters.

"Absolutely. No question," said Chris Aronson, head of distribution for the studio, which reported stellar reaction in exit polls from audiences after seeing "Avatar." "The word of mouth is something that I don't know I've ever seen in this business before." "Avatar" was a test case for the future of digital 3-D projection, which until now has been a hit with audiences mainly on animated family films.

The film fell short of the record for December debuts of \$77.2 million set two years ago by Will Smith's "I Am Legend." But it did break the record for a film opening in 3-D, previously held by last summer's "Up" with \$68.1 million.

"What they spent on this movie was totally justified, and they're going to more than earn it back," said Paul Dergarabedian, box-office analyst for Hollywood.com.

"Avatar" stars Sam Worthington and Zoe Saldana

in a love story amid human-alien conflict on a distant moon in the 22nd century.

Storms on the East Coast kept many people at home, cutting into weekend movie business.

"The weather really, really hurt," said Rory Bruer, head of distribution at Sony, whose comedy "Did You Hear About the Morgans?", opened at a weak No. 4 with \$7 million. Sony had expected the movie to debut at about \$8 million.

The movie stars Sarah Jessica Parker and Hugh Grant as a couple whose crumbling marriage gets a fresh jolt after they see a murder and are sent into witness protection.

The overall box office shot up on the strength of "Avatar." Hollywood's domestic revenues came in at \$134 million, up 51.5 percent from the same weekend last year, when "Yes Man" opened at No. 1 with \$18.3 million, according to Hollywood.com. The previous weekend's No. 1 movie, Disney's animated musical "The Princess and the Frog," slipped to second place with \$12.2 million, raising its total to \$44.8 million.

Paramount's recession story "Up in the Air," which led last Tuesday's Golden Globes announcement with six nominations, broke into the top 10 as it widened to more theaters ahead of its nationwide expansion Wednesday.

"Up in the Air" came in at No. 8 with \$3.1 million. The film stars George Clooney as a man addicted to the frequent-flyer life as he travels the country firing people at downsizing companies.

Two music-themed films had strong starts in limited release as they position themselves for

Academy Awards attention. The Weinstein Co. musical "Nine" opened big with \$246,933 in four theaters, for an average of \$61,733 a cinema, compared to an average of \$21,147 in 3,452 theaters for "Avatar."

Based on the stage musical that was inspired by Federico Fellini's film masterpiece "8 1/2," "Nine" has an all-star cast that includes Daniel Day-Lewis, Nicole Kidman, Penelope Cruz and Kate Hudson. "Nine" goes into nationwide release Christmas Day.

Fox Searchlight's "Crazy Heart," starring Jeff Bridges as a boozy country singer trying to turn his life around, pulled in \$84,204 at four theaters in New York City and Los Angeles, averaging \$21,051 a cinema. The film expands to four more markets

on Christmas Day.

No one expects "Avatar" to be another "Titanic," which started with a modest \$28.6 million opening weekend domestically but held on at No. 1 for months. The film finished with a record \$600 million domestically and \$1.8 billion worldwide.

Before "Avatar" opened, Cameron had said the movie might not have a "slam-dunk opening weekend" but that its profitability hinged on how well it held up in subsequent weekends.

Unlike other Hollywood franchises, which usually are based on comic books, TV shows, toys or other existing stories and ideas, "Avatar" was an original tale whose concept was not pre-sold to audiences.

Much of the action takes place among 10-foot-tall, blue-

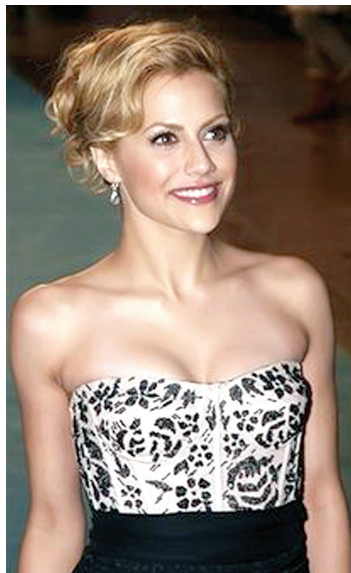
skinned aliens created by digital cameras that captured actors' performances, with computer animation adding the details of the characters, along with the exotic backgrounds and other effects.

Some reviewers found the story and characters two-dimensional, but critics generally were wowed by the dazzling images Cameron created.

"I think it is the must-see film event of recent memory," Fox executive Aronson said. "I do believe it is a game-changing movie. It will change the way people think about movies, the way they see movies, what they want to see in movies."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Hollywood.com. Final figures will be released Monday. □

Hospital: Actress Brittany Murphy dies at age 32



FILE - In this Nov. 26, 2006 file photo, U.S. actress Brittany Murphy arrives in Leicester Square for the European premiere of her latest film 'Happy Feet' in central London. The Los Angeles Fire Department has responded to a 911 call from the home of actress Brittany Murphy's husband. Fire Department spokesman Devon Gale says the call was made at 8 a.m. Sunday from a home in Los Angeles that is listed as belonging to British screenwriter Simon Monjack, who is married to Murphy. Gale says one person was transported to a hospital.

(AP Photo/Max Nash, File)

By CHRIS WEBER,
Associated Press Writer
LOS ANGELES — Brittany Murphy, the actress who got her start in the sleeper hit "Clueless" and rose to stardom in "8 Mile," has died in Los Angeles. She was 32.

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center Spokeswoman Sally Stewart said Murphy died at 10:04 a.m. Sunday. She would not provide a cause of death, or any other information.

The Los Angeles Fire Department responded to a call at 8 a.m. Sunday from a home that is listed as belonging to British screenwriter Simon Monjack, who is married to Murphy, spokesman Devon Gale said. Gale said one person was transported to a hospital.

Messages left for Murphy's manager, agent and publicist by The Associated Press weren't immediately returned. Born Nov. 10, 1977 in Atlanta, Murphy grew up in New Jersey and later moved with her mother to Los Angeles to pursue acting.

Her career started in the early 1990s with small roles in television series, commercials and movies. She is best known for parts in "Girl, Interrupted," "Clueless" and "8 Mile."

Her on-screen roles declined in recent years, but Murphy's voice gave life to numerous animated characters, including Luanne Platter on more than 200 episodes of Fox's "King of the Hill" and Gloria the

penguin in "Happy Feet."

She is due to appear in Sylvester Stallone's upcoming film, "The Expendables," set for release next year.

Her role in "8 Mile" led to more recognition, Murphy told The Associated Press in 2003. "That changed a lot," she said. "That was the difference between people knowing my first and last name as opposed to not."

Murphy credited her mother, Sharon, with being a key to her success.

"When I asked my mom to move to California, she sold everything and moved out here for me," Murphy told the AP in 2003. "I was really grateful to have grown up in an environment that was conducive to creating and didn't stifle any of that. She always believed in me."

She dated Ashton Kutcher, who costarred with Murphy in 2003's romantic comedy "Just Married."

Kutcher tweeted Sunday morning about Murphy's death: "2day the world lost a little piece of sunshine," Kutcher wrote. "My deepest condolences go out 2 Brittany's family, her husband, & her amazing mother Sharon." □

Santa Claus rally could still show up this year

By DAVE CARPENTER,
AP Personal Finance Writer

Skeptical kids can doubt whether Santa Claus exists. But for stock-market statisticians, there's not much debate: The year-end lift known as the Santa Claus rally is no myth. The stock market typically posts modest, but reliable, gains in late December into the beginning of early January.

"It's pretty much like clockwork," says Jeff Hirsch, editor of the Stock Trader's Almanac, which tracks market trends. "And when it doesn't happen, it can be a very helpful warning of impending trouble."

This year the stock market began December in somewhat typical fashion with a stagnant first half of the month. The Standard & Poor's 500 Index is up just 0.6 percent so far in December, and the Dow Jones

industrial average is down 0.2 percent.

That leaves room for the market to snap back by the end of the year, although stocks are still facing headwinds from lingering doubts about the economy as well as trepidation among investors about the huge gains logged so far this year. The S&P is already up 22 percent in 2009, the Dow 18 percent.

The entire period around the end of the year, though, has a bullish track record.

Consider:

- November through January tends to be the best three-month span for stocks. Over the past four decades the average gain from Nov. 20 through the end of January has been 4.2 percent, or an annualized rate of 23 percent, according to James Stack, president of InvesTech Research in

Whitefish, Mont.

- December is the best single month, with the Standard & Poor's 500 stock index averaging a 1.6 percent gain. The first December after a bear market ends performs even better, averaging 3.1 percent.

- The S&P has increased an average of 1.5 percent during the seven trading days that start with Christmas Eve and end with the first two days in January since 1950. That's the widely recognized period for the Santa Claus rally, as first identified in 1972 by Stock Trader's Almanac founder Yale Hirsch, Jeff's father.

- Stocks went up in 12 of the last 15 of those year-end periods.

To better understand what drives the Santa Claus rally, let's look at the variety of positive factors for the stock market that usually come

Santa Claus rally does exist

The stock market has an annual tendency to rise starting in late December, posting modest gains and lasting into early January.

Average month-to-month change in Standard and Poor's 500
January 1950 - April 2009, based on monthly closing prices



SOURCE: Stock Trader's Almanac 2010

AP

Graphic shows average monthly change in Standard and Poor's

together around this time of the year.

The holidays are the strongest retail season of the year, giving a boost to the economy while also generating positive headlines. Year-end investment reports also tend to offer upbeat outlooks for the coming year, and often plug hot stock picks just as investors are repositioning their portfolios.

And since lots of investors are already in a good mood this time of year anyway,

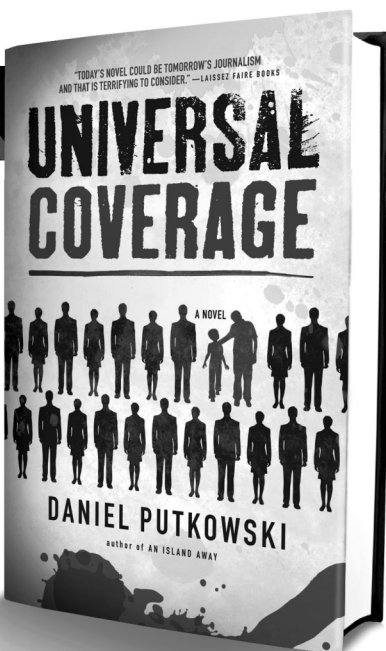
more people tend to be buying rather than selling around the holidays.

"It's one of the most reliable rallies of the year," says Scott Marcouiller, senior equity strategist for Wells Fargo Advisers. "The probability is very high that we get a move up before the end of this year."

Also, investors who might normally sell stocks for tax purposes late in the year could be more likely to hold off this time around. □

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SPORTS

Aruba TODAY



Burke becomes first American to lead biathlon World Cup

By PATRICK HORNE

AP Sports Writer

Tim Burke made U.S. biathlon history on Sunday, adding to the American squad's expectations for the Vancouver Olympics.

In a first for a U.S. biathlete, Burke took over the lead in the World Cup standings by placing sixth in a men's 12.5-kilometer pursuit Sunday in Pokljuka, Slovenia.

"I'm incredibly excited, it has not quite hit me yet," Burke, of Lake Placid, N.Y., said in a conference call. "I'm going to need a few days."

Evgeny Ustyugov of Russia won the race, missing two



Tim Burke from the U.S. competes during the men 12.5 km pursuit, at the biathlon World Cup event in Pokljuka, Slovenia, Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009. Burke placed sixth but is the overall leader.

Associated Press

the team's European managers and wax technicians, for lifting the performance of U.S. biathletes. "Before I started working with Per I hadn't scored a World Cup point."

Nilsson was hired to coach the U.S. team after the 2006 Turin Games, with the goal of helping the Americans win their first Olympic medal. Burke's success has made that target seem much closer heading into the Vancouver Games.

"I'm really excited about the Vancouver course," said Burke, a 2006 Olympian. "It suits my style really well. It's very similar to the course we raced here this week."

In the women's 10K pursuit, Svetlana Sleptsova missed two targets but finished in 34:03.2 to record her second victory in two days. She also won Saturday's sprint.

Magdalena Neuner of Germany was second and Anna Bogaliy-Titovets of Russia was third.

Helena Jonsson of Sweden leads the overall standings with 342 points after finishing seventh Sunday. Anna Carin Olofsson-Zidek of Sweden is next and Sleptsova rose to third. □

NFL to ask its players to donate brains for study



This is an Oct. 26, 2009, file photo showing Philadelphia Eagles tight end L.J. Smith holding his head after a hard hit by Atlanta Falcons' Lawyer Milloy during the fourth quarter of a football game in Philadelphia. Smith suffered a concussion and Milloy was flagged for an unnecessary roughness penalty on the play. In dozens of interviews across the NFL this week, The Associated Press found players voicing nearly unanimous support for changes in league policies on concussions.

Associated Press

By HOWARD FENDRICH

AP Sports Writer

The NFL is partnering with Boston University brain researchers who have been critical of the league's stance on concussions, The Associated Press learned Sunday.

The league now plans to encourage current and former NFL players to agree to donate their brains to the Boston University Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy, which has said it found links between repeated head trauma and brain damage in boxers, football players and, most recently, a former NHL player.

Continued on Page 15

targets but finishing in 34 minutes, 50.9 seconds to beat Roland Lessing of Austria by 9.3 seconds.

Burke missed three targets and was 37.4 seconds behind Ustyugov, but moved up one spot in the overall standings. He has 253 points to lead Simon Fourcade of France by seven.

"This really is a historic moment for all of us," said Max Cobb, U.S. Biathlon's executive director.

The U.S. has never won an Olympic medal in biathlon,

a sport long dominated by Europeans.

The 27-year-old Burke began the World Cup season with two podium finishes, a second and a third.

The silver medal matched the highest World Cup showing by an American.

Burke credits his experience — he first tried the sport when he was 12 — and a team effort for his breakthrough season.

"I really don't feel like I'm at a disadvantage to the Europeans now," he said, citing coach Per Nilsson of Sweden, as well as

Lange wins again in World Cup



Team USA 1 with pilot Steven Holcomb and Justin Olsen, Steve Mesler, Curtis Tomasevich react after crossing the finish line as second placed in the FIBT 4 Man Bobsleigh World Cup competition in Altenberg, Germany, Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009.

Associated Press

ALTENBERG, Germany (AP) — Two-time Olympic champion Andre Lange won a four-man bobsled World Cup race in his final appearance on his home track in Germany on Sunday, adding to his earlier win in a two-man event.

Lange and his team — Rene Hoppe, Kevin Kuske and Martin Putze — finished 0.76 seconds ahead of the United States' Steven Holcomb, who had driven to victory in the three previous World Cup four-man races and leads the standings.

Holcomb was joined by his reigning world championship team of Justin Olsen, Steve Mesler and Curt Tomasevich.

Russia's Evgeny Popov — with Denis Moiseychenkov, Andrey Yurkov and Alexey Kireev — was third for his first podium finish since February 2007. □



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NHL Roundup

Huet, Blackhawks beat Red Wings 3-0

CHICAGO – Cristobal Huet made 20 saves for his second straight shutout, and Duncan Keith had a goal and an assist to lead the Chicago Blackhawks to their fourth victory in a row, 3-0 over the Detroit Red Wings on Sunday night.

Brian Campbell and Dustin Byfuglien also scored to help Chicago move back into first place in the Central Division. Detroit, shut out for the fourth time in its last 15 games, has lost two straight.

Huet, also a 3-0 winner over St. Louis on Wednesday night, had to make only a handful of tough saves against the injury-depleted Red Wings en route to his third shutout this season, 23rd overall and first against Detroit.

On Detroit's two best chances, Huet made a glove save on Ville Leino late in the first period, and a pad save on Brad Stuart midway through the second.

Detroit's Chris Osgood stopped 32 shots.

The Red Wings played without eight regulars, including scoring leader Henrik Zetterberg. He missed his second game because of a shoulder injury and will be out at least two weeks.

Blackhawks right wing Marian Hossa played his first game against the Red Wings, his previous team, since signing as a free agent with Chicago in July. Hossa skated with Detroit in 2008-09 on a one-year contract.

Hossa was recovering from offseason shoulder surgery when Detroit beat Chicago 3-2 on Oct. 8 in the teams' only previous meeting this season.

Chicago dominated most of the the first period and led 1-0 after 20 minutes on Keith's power-play goal at 7:58. Keith's quick wrist shot from the left point fooled Osgood and sailed past him on the glove side.

Campbell and Byfuglien scored in a 3:22 span late in the second period.

Campbell scored with 3:55 left in the second. He pinched to the left circle, took Patrick Sharp's feed and fired a shot that struck Osgood on the stick side and continued into the net.

Byfuglien's 40-foot shot from the slot slid under Osgood's outstretched right pad with 33 second left in the period.

Detroit's best chance in the third came on Drew Miller's shot from the left circle with 5:08 left. □



Chicago Blackhawks goalie Cristobal Huet, from France, tries to make save as Detroit Red Wings' Tomas Holmstrom stands in front of the goal during the first period of an NHL hockey game in Chicago on Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009.

Associated Press



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NBA Roundup

Bryant scores 28 points, Lakers beat Pistons 93-81



Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant (24) drives to the basket as Detroit Pistons forward DaJuan Summers defends in the second half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009, in Auburn Hills, Mich. Bryant led the Lakers with 28 points in a 93-81 win.

Associated Press

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan (AP) — Kobe Bryant scored 28 points and helped the Los Angeles Lakers build a big lead in a 93-81 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Sunday night.

The Lakers took the lead with

an 11-0 run midway through the first quarter, started the second ahead by 12, had an 18-point lead at halftime and a 21-point cushion after three quarters.

Los Angeles closed a trip with a four-game winning streak

and an NBA-best 22-win, 4-loss record.

Rodney Stuckey scored 16 points, Swedish rookie Jonas Jerebko had 15 and rookie reserve Austin Daye added 10 points for the Pistons.

Three of Detroit's best players were out of action: Richard Hamilton, Ben Gordon and Tayshaun Prince.

The Lakers, though, didn't have much sympathy because travel woes led to them getting to their Detroit-area hotel at 4 a.m. Sunday after beating the New Jersey Nets on Saturday night.

Celtics 122, Timberwolves 104

At Boston, Paul Pierce scored 29 points and hit all six of his 3-point attempts as Boston finished with a season high in points.

Kendrick Perkins had 14 points

to go with 11 rebounds, and Rajon Rondo had 13 points and 15 assists as the Celtics beat the Timberwolves for the sixth consecutive time since acquiring Kevin Garnett in an unprecedented 7-for-1 deal during the summer of 2007.

Jonny Flynn scored 21 points for Minnesota.

Grizzlies 102, Nuggets 96

At Memphis, Zach Randolph had 32 points and a career-high 24 boards, the highest rebound total in the league this season.

Rudy Gay added 19 points for Memphis, which ended an eight-game losing streak to Denver. Marc Gasol had 14 points and 13 rebounds, and O.J. Mayo and Mike Conley scored 11 apiece.

Carmelo Anthony finished with 41 points for Denver.

Trail Blazers 102, Heat 95

At Miami, Brandon Roy scored 11 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter and LaMarcus Aldridge added 22 for Portland, which trailed by six with 5½ minutes remaining.

Dwyane Wade scored 28 points and had 10 assists for the Heat, but he was 13 of 31 from the field and didn't have a rebound for only the fourth time in his career. Quentin Richardson shot 7-for-7 from 3-point range, tying a Heat record, and added 22 points for Miami.

Raptors 98, Hornets 92

At Toronto, Chris Bosh had 25 points and 11 rebounds for the Raptors.

Jarrett Jack had 15 points and Hedo Turkoglu scored 14 for the Raptors, who held the Hornets to 39 percent shooting. □

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CONCUSSION

Continued from Page 12

"It's huge that the NFL actively gets behind this research," said Robert Cantu, a doctor who is a co-director of the BU center and has spoken negatively about the league in the past. "It forwards the research. It allows players to realize the NFL is concerned about the possibility that they could have this problem, and that the NFL is doing everything it can to find out about the risks and the preventive strategies that can be implemented."

NFL spokesman Greg Aiello told the AP on Sunday that the league also is committed to giving \$1 million or more to the center. Aiello said the league already has held discussions with the NFL Alumni Association about suggesting that retired players look into participating in BU's work by offering their brains for study after they die.

The league also will contact the nearly 100 retired football players who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia and are receiving benefits from the league to ask their families to consider donating those players' brains to the BU study.

"The people affiliated with the center have identified the donation of brains, both from healthy people and those that have had multiple concussions, as their most critical need right now to further the research into this disease," Aiello said. "We ... will discuss with the center its research needs as we go forward in this partnership."

Cantu said he and NFL commissioner Roger Goodell met in October to discuss concussions and the BU project.

Sunday's news represents the latest in a series of moves the NFL has made in recent weeks to step up its attention to concussions in the aftermath of a congressional hearing on the topic.

That included stricter return-to-play guidelines detailing what symptoms preclude someone from participating in games or practices; a mandate that each team select a league- and union-approved independent neurologist to be consulted when players get concussions; and the departure of the two co-chairmen of the NFL's committee on brain trauma.

"They have done a bit of an about-face. Pressure probably has played a role in that," Cantu

said in a telephone interview. "But I honestly think that Goodell does believe in player safety and the product is just better with your best players on the field, not your best players injured."

Aiello said Sunday that a concussion study the league has been conducting since 2007 is on hold until the former committee co-chairmen — Ira Casson and David Viano — are replaced. They resigned last month. He said the league is interviewing candidates, none of whom is currently affiliated with the league or any team.

"Now that we're changing the committee, we want to make some revisions in how the study proceeds," Aiello said in a telephone interview.

The New York Times first reported that the study is on hold.

Casson is slated to testify at a House Judiciary Committee

Concussions prevalent among NFL'ers

Exactly half of the 160 NFL players surveyed by The Associated Press, said they have had a concussion during their football careers.

■ Yes ■ No ■ Other (not sure, no answer, not applicable)

1. Have you ever sustained a concussion that forced you to miss playing time?

61 95*

2. Do you worry about getting a concussion more than other injuries?

30 129

3. Have you ever hidden or downplayed the effects of a concussion?

30 113

4. Have you followed the recent developments in the news about concussions and dementia among NFL players, including the recent congressional hearing on the topic?

82 78

5. Do you think the game is significantly safer now than in the past, particularly with regard to the risk of concussions?

Safer: 107
Same or less safe: 33

* Includes 19 who said they have had a concussion but did not miss playing time

AP

hearing Jan. 4 about football head injuries. He did not attend the panel's hearing Oct. 28, when BU's Cantu said there is "growing and convincing evidence" that repetitive concussive and subconcussive hits to the head in NFL players leads to a degenerative brain

disease.

Another co-director of the BU center, Ann McKee, showed the committee images of brains of dead football players with the disease and told lawmakers, "We need to take radical steps" to change the way football is played. □

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NFL Roundup

Chargers beat grieving Bengals 27-24

BERNIE WILSON

AP Sports Writer

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Nate Kaeding kicked a 52-yard field goal with 3 seconds left as the playoff-bound San Diego Chargers pulled off a dramatic 27-24 win over the grieving Cincinnati Bengals on Sunday.

The winning kick came after Philip Rivers moved the Chargers 46 yards in 51 seconds with no timeouts.

The Bengals, playing three days after the death of receiver Chris Henry, tied the game at 24-all on Shayne Graham's 34-yard field goal with 54 seconds left.

San Diego won its ninth straight game and clinched a playoff spot before halftime because Miami, Jacksonville and the New York Jets all lost this weekend.

The Bengals failed for the second straight week to clinch the AFC North.

Steelers 37, Packers 36

At Pittsburgh, Ben Roethlisberger ended the game the way he started it by throwing a touchdown pass to Mike Wallace, a desperation 19-yarder on the final play that ended the Packers' five-game winning streak and the Steelers' five-game losing streak.

The Packers stalled in their playoff run as they couldn't hold leads of 28-27 and 36-30 in a frantic fourth quarter. Green Bay could have secured a playoff spot with its first win in Pittsburgh since 1970 and a Giants loss or tie on Monday night.

Wallace also caught a 60-yard scoring pass on Pittsburgh's first play of the game as the Steelers joined five other AFC teams tied at seven wins and seven losses in the chase for the AFC's last playoff spot.

Titans 27, Dolphins 24, OT



San Diego Chargers kicker Nate Kaeding watches his 52-yard field goal during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game against the Cincinnati Bengals Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009 in San Diego. Kaeding's field goal gave the Chargers a 27-24 win.

At Nashville, Rob Bironas kicked a 46-yard field goal in overtime as Tennessee kept alive its slim playoff hopes for another week by holding off Miami.

Vince Young threw for a career-high three touchdowns and Chris Johnson ran for 104 yards as the Titans — with seven wins and seven losses — reached .500 for the first time this year. But the Titans made it far too interesting by blowing an 18-point lead.

Browns 41, Chiefs 34

At Kansas City, Jerome Harrison scored his third touchdown with 44 seconds left and rushed for a team-record 286 yards for the Browns.

Joshua Cribbs also returned two kickoffs for touchdowns in the first half, breaking the NFL career record and tying the single-game mark.

Harrison took it from there, scoring all of his touchdowns in the second half to break Jim

Brown's team record of 237 yards, set in 1957 and 1961. He closed it out with a 28-yard run off right tackle to finish behind only Adrian Peterson and Corey Dillon in the NFL record book.

Patriots 17, Bills 10

At Orchard Park, New York, the Patriots won their first road game on this side of the Atlantic this season by beating their AFC East rival for the 13th straight time and 18th time in 19 meetings.

The Bills were undone by 11 penalties for 124 yards, including a pair of pass-interference calls that set up New England's first two scores.

Eagles 27, 49ers 13

At Philadelphia, Donovan McNabb threw for one touchdown and ran for another and DeSean Jackson had 140 yards receiving as the Eagles clinched a playoff berth for the eighth time this decade.

With San Francisco's loss, the

Arizona Cardinals clinched their second straight NFC West title.

The Eagles (10-4) have won five straight games and have a one-game lead over Dallas in the NFC East.

Cardinals 31, Lions 24

At Detroit, Kurt Warner threw a 5-yard touchdown pass to Anquan Boldin with 1:54 left to help Arizona move a step closer toward clinching the NFC West.

The Cardinals needed a victory in Detroit and a San Francisco loss later in the day in Philadelphia to win consecutive division titles for the first time since 1974-75. Arizona led 17-0 at halftime, then let the Lions make it 17-all in the third quarter and 24-all with 3:48 left.

The Cardinals went 58 yards on their game-winning drive, gaining 34 yards on Beanie Wells' run, and Boldin broke two tackles on a third-and-3 to score.

Raiders 20, Broncos 19

At Denver, JaMarcus Russell threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to Chaz Schilens with 35 seconds left for the winner.

Ravens 31, Bears 7

At Baltimore, Joe Flacco threw a career-high four touchdown passes as the Ravens capitalized on six Chicago turnovers.

Baltimore led 14-0 after 13 minutes and 31-7 after three quarters. The victory solidified the Ravens' hold on the sixth and final playoff spot in the AFC and improved their record against teams currently with losing records to 6-0.

Falcons 10, Jets 7

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Tony Gonzalez caught a 6-yard touchdown pass from Matt Ryan on a fourth-down play with 1:38 remaining as the Falcons, a day after being eliminated from playoff contention, also likely ended the chances for the Jets.

Texans 16, Rams 13

At St. Louis, Matt Schaub had his eighth 300-yard passing game and Andre Johnson set a season best with 196 yards receiving, but the Texans ended up leaning on field goals to hold off the lowly Rams.

The Rams lost their 12th in a row at home and for the 23rd time in 24 games overall only three days after canceling practice after a confirmed case of swine flu.

Buccaneers 24, Seahawks 7

At Seattle, rookie Josh Freeman shook off his ninth interception in just over two games to throw two touchdown passes in the second half.

Tampa Bay's 26th-ranked defense forced five turnovers by Seattle quarterback Matt Hasselbeck, as the Buccaneers won for just the second time in 17 games. □

LOCAL

Aruba TODAY

On Top Of The News

Email: news@arubatoday.com

Monday, December 21, 2009



Curacao: Case of missing US diplomat going cold

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Curacao detectives are still trying to solve the disappearance of a U.S. diplomat whose bloodied clothes were found nearly three months ago on a rocky beach, a police official said Sunday.

Police spokesman Alfred Suarez says the missing-person case remains open. But he says that there have been no new leads since police broadcast a video in October asking islanders for more information on the last known whereabouts of U.S. Vice Consul James Hogan.

The 49-year-old American official vanished Sept. 24 after leaving his Curacao home for one of his regular late-night walks. Police said a trail of Hogan's blood was found on rocks leading to the water at Baya Beach, where his clothes were folded neatly. An expensive kitchen knife and Hogan's cell phone were found in the water just off the beach. Curacao investigators have said they are considering all possibilities, including suicide. In the days after Hogan's disappearance, the local coast guard and the U.S. Navy scoured the shoreline. Newspapers published missing-person fliers with Hogan's photo.

U.S. State Department spokesman Darby Holladay declined to comment Sunday. Hogan, a Florida resident, arrived in Curacao in August 2008 for a two-year assignment. The Dutch island off the coast of Venezuela is the seat of the Netherlands Antilles government. □

Caribbean Speed Printing hosts holiday celebration for employees

Aruba Today celebrates the holidays with Mr. Jazz

PALM BEACH — Caribbean Speed Printing N.V. celebrated the holiday season with a lovely dinner at Mr. Jazz in the Paseo Herencia Mall. CSP is the mother company of Aruba Today and Bon Dia Aruba and they all celebrated together. Publisher John Chemaly Jr. together with CSP General Manager Grace Mary Maduro hosted the special event for the management and staff of both publications on Saturday at Mr. Jazz. Editor-in-Chief Julia Renfro and International & Sports Editor Richard Brooks celebrated the evening with great food and lots of salsa dancing with the instructors of Pachanga School of Dance. The event wouldn't have been so exciting without the great music from C-Zar Olarte and The Untouchables who kept



the dance floor exciting. Aruba Today sends Holiday

wishes to sister company Bon Dia Aruba and congratulates them for this holiday season. □

Laura Dekker: missing girl sailor found on Dutch Caribbean Island

A 14-old girl prevented by Dutch social workers from sailing solo around world was found on the Caribbean island of Saint Martin on Sunday night after running away from home at the weekend.



Laura Dekker, the Dutch teenager who wanted to sail solo around the world, has been found on the Caribbean island of Saint Martin

Photo AP

By Bruno Waterfield

Laura Dekker was placed under state supervision two months ago after social services thwarted her plans to become the youngest person to sail around the world alone.

Child care authorities said the teenage sailor would be returned to the Netherlands from Saint Martin, in the Dutch Antilles near

the Virgin Islands, as soon as possible.

She went missing on Friday after taking £3,100 (3500 euros) in cash from her bank account earlier in the week. According to Dutch press reports, she left a letter for her father, Dick Dekker, before disappearing.

Miss Dekker was said by her family to be in a "negative spiral" after the Utrecht District Court placed her under the supervision of child care authorities in October, after forbidding her voyage in the summer.

The teenager, who has dual Dutch and New Zealand citizenship, was found after Dutch police issue an international airports alert.

In August, while aged 13, Miss Dekker was taken into child custody to prevent her voyaging alone through some of the world's most dangerous waters.

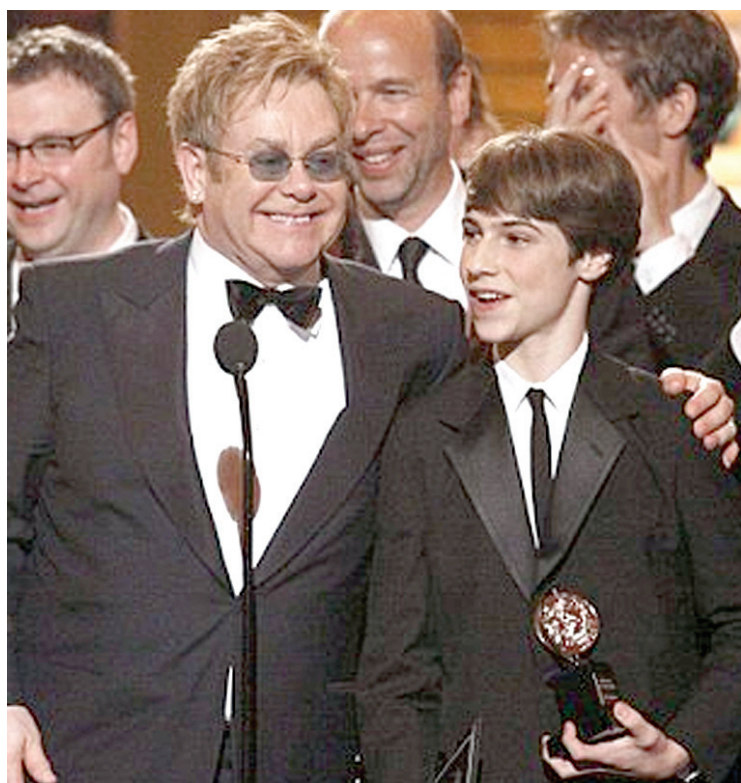
She was stopped from setting sail just days before Mike Perham, a 17-year-old Briton, broke the current world record for being the youngest ever around the world solo-sailor, a voyage she wanted to emulate.

In spite of Miss Dekker having the support of her parents, the Dutch courts ruled in October that she was too young to be aware of the dangers and that an isolated two year voyage on the high seas would damage her development.

During legal proceedings it emerged that Miss Dekker had first been placed in foster care by British police after she sailed single-handed from Holland to Britain in May.

Lowestoft police contacted their Dutch counterparts who alerted the Utrecht social services, leading to the decision to place her in care. □

Broadway sensation Kiril Kulish to star in Leonid Kozlov's production of "The Nutcracker" at the Occidental Grand Hotel during holiday



Kiril with Elton John winning the Tony



Kiril kulish as nutcracker prince

the most respected Russian designers and artists.

Kiril, who made Broadway history with his two co-stars who shared the role of Billy as the youngest performers ever to take the trophy for best male performance, reports he is excited to return to Aruba and work with Leonid Kozlov again. Leonid expressed his opinion that Kiril is one of the most remarkable and diverse young talents he has ever seen, and has devised a special program that will showcase the several dance disciplines 15-year-old Kiril has mastered.

Kiril, by the age of 12, was established as an important presence in the international world of dance by being awarded the highest honor, Grand Prix, at one of the largest student ballet competitions, Youth America Grand Prix. He also has won titles as US Champion in Latin Ballroom Dance and US National Karate Champion. An accomplished concert pianist, he performed to sold-out crowds in Mexico City and has won the World Classical Pianist Chopin



Award as well as first place at Young Musician's Piano Performance "La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art Piano Pieces".

A full performance of Leonid Kozlov's "The Nutcracker" will be staged in the Occidental Ballroom on Wednesday, December 30, and excerpts from the program will be combined with a special solo program by Kiril Kulish on Saturday, January 2. Both programs begin at 8:00 PM. Advanced ticket sales for this unique production are available through the concierge desk of the Occidental Grand in Palm Beach, which can be contacted at 586-4500 ext 3999. Tickets are only \$20 U.S. (35 Aruban florin,) and are also sold at the parking cashier in the Paseo Herencia Mall in Palm Beach. A free

preview of the production will be performed at the shopping and entertainment center on Sunday, December 27 at 8:00 PM. For more information regarding ticket availability and to make reservations inquire with the concierge in your resort or call, on Aruba, (297) 593-6462, or visit the website www.dancearuba.com. Tickets can also be purchased at the Van Dorp bookstores located on Avenida Milio Croes, as well as in the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort in Palm Beach and the Divi and Tamarijn Mega All-Inclusive Resorts in Eagle Beach. Occidental Grand will host only two performances of this seasonal favorite starring Kiril Kulish, a memorable addition to the holidays on Aruba, so it is recommended to purchase tickets early. □

ORANJESTAD - Fresh from his starring role in this year's Tony Award winner for Best Musical, "Billy Elliot," Kiril Kulish, who also won the Tony for Best Male Performer in a Broadway Musical, will appear on the stage of the Occidental Grand Aruba in Palm Beach during holiday season 2009. The resort is proud to announce they have added Leonid Kozlov's "The Nutcracker" to their holiday schedule in the ballroom, with two performances open to the general public. Kiril, a multi-faceted dance prodigy, will reprise the role of the Nutcracker/Prince he performed on the island two years ago.

Cast members for this beloved holiday classic will include dance professionals from Leonid Kozlov Dance International USA as well

as 40 young dancers from Aruba's Club di Movimiento in the children's parts.

Leonid, a part-time resident of Aruba, was formerly a principal dancer of the Bolshoi Ballet before defecting to the west and assuming the role of principal dancer of the New York City Ballet under George Balanchine. He starred on Broadway in the revival of Roger's and Hart's "On your Toes." Leonid first conceived and staged his version of "The Nutcracker" while guest choreographer and guest dancer of the Australian Ballet and it has prompted standing ovations around the world.

Mr. Kozlov is very excited to have Kiril again take the lead role in this popular production, featuring Tchaikovsky's immortal music and sumptuous sets and costumes commissioned from



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Super excitement at Café the Plaza as Quiz Night teams go for a shoot-out



ORANJESTAD - Synergy and The Corner Girls, two terrific and fanatic teams at the weekly Café the Plaza Quiz Night Series, went for a shoot-out last Tuesday after the tallying up their points proved them equal. Three new questions had to provide a winner, and yes: The Corner Girls won and went home with two bottles of wine. Last Tuesday was the final night of an excellent 8-week series, in which more and more teams came to do battle.

The quiz nights consist of a myriad of questions, some very difficult, some rather easy. The 1963-2009 music round is always a favorite: this time there was the song by Eminem (We Made You) and Boudewijn de Groot's Welterusten, Mijnheer de President. Another question was about achromatopsy, which is color blindness.

The big winners of the November/December series were repeat champions 1. Bier Hier, 2. Synergy and 3. Kamikaze. Bier Hier chose as its prize a goodie basket filled with lovely bottles of Jägermeister, Absolut Vodka, Jameson whisky, caps, shirts, games and gadgets, while Synergy won the Golf

Clinic for 5 at Tierra del Sol. Kamikaze received a gift certificate of Salt & Pepper Restaurant.

December 15 was also the last day that trainee Jordy Sijtsma was in action; he is returning to Holland and will be replaced by Sarina Liptaiy. The next Quiz Night Series starts on January 5. □



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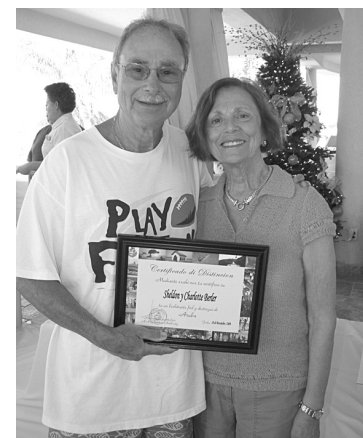
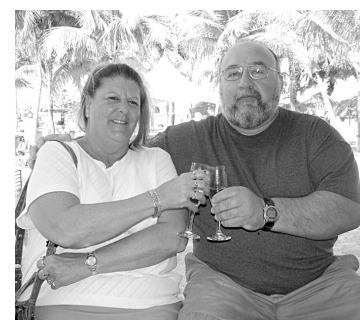
PALM BEACH - A joyous occasion at Pure Beach, Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort, brought together repeat visitors Burt & Harriet Zuckerman, Charles Reiner & Susan Lockshine, Sheldon & Charlotte Berler, Robert &

Joyce Bedard, Bill & Cindy Windsor, Frank & Marisa Marafioli, Jeff & Julie Formax, and Sandee & Bill Fagin who have been returning to the island each year, for the past decade.

For their loyalty, the visitors were each presented a Distinguished Visitor award, while Frank & Marilyn Charak, and Dolores Verbit who have been visiting Aruba every year for the last 20 consecutive years, were named Goodwill Ambassadors.

The guests honored at Divi Phoenix accumulated over 200 years worth of repeat!! The informal ceremony, was presided by the representative of the Aruba Tourism Authority, Francis Jacobs. Jacobs warmly awarded the VIP visitors their certificates of distinction on behalf of the Minister of Tourism in gratitude for their support of the island and devotion to its people.

Lillian Maduro representing the Divi Phoenix management team, arranged for a friendly toast and delicious hors d'oeuvres to mark the festivities.



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On Wednesday, December 23

Salsa band Tsunami and a live grill at Café the Plaza



ORANJESTAD - The Christmas holidays are off to a swinging start at Café the Plaza in the Renaissance Marketplace, when the popular salsa band Tsunami is performing outside on Wednesday, December 23. Salsas and meringues will surely live up the colorful Christmas display across from the restaurant. Adding to all the merriment is a live grill, that will be manned by chef Mario Verbaas. "This is going to be special," he announces. So, what's happening at the outside grill? "Well, it is

a do-it-yourself-hamburger event," explains the chef. "When you buy a hamburger you can add bacon, onions, mushrooms, lettuce, cucumber and pineapple yourself,

creating a personal, heavenly hamburger." Garlic sauce, cocktail sauce, mayonnaise and ketchup will be on hand to add even more flavor. Tsunami will be playing until

midnight. After that many guests will surely come inside Café the Plaza to keep the party going until the wee hours, long into December 24. □

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 Fri. Dec. 25 closed

Ten Year Celebration at Sushi-Ya Sake Bar & Japanese Restaurant



ORANJESTAD – Celebrity, Japanese-Peruvian Chef Toshiro Konishi, was met with great enthusiasm at Sushi-Ya, Renaissance Marketplace, this weekend as he prepared his award winning specialties for local patrons eager to experience his novel twist on traditional Japanese cuisine, on the occasion of the restaurant's 10th anniversary.

The special menu prepared for the celebration featured Maguro pickled in olive oil, rice vinegar with Criole sauce which won Best Dish in Seville Spain at an international competition, Hotategai in Tiger Milk topped with Tobiko which won Best Dish in Madrid, Spain at an International Food Expo, Toshiro's Ceviche, Wakame Salad, Lettuce wrapped Gyoza, an assortments of Makis -- Shiitake, Rainbow, Fried and Cevichado, Mussels topped with Peruvian lemon sauce, Pork Misozuke and Lychee with vanilla ice cream, all accompanied by Navarro Correas sparkling wine and UmeBlanc with dessert.

Sushi-Ya owners Sven & Daisy Ellerkamp met the chef in Bogotá at an international food show and invited him



as their special guests in celebration of their successful decade in Oranjestad as the first Japanese restaurant in town.

Many of Sushi Ya's regulars dropped in for a drink and a taste to congratulate the restaurateurs on their success. Chef Toshiro mingles with patrons, declaring he loves Aruba and will be coming back on vacation soon.

When in Peru, visit his

namesake restaurant Toshiro, in San Isidro, an upscale district of Lima, and drop in to dine at Sushi-Ya, any day of the week, the local sushi masters there now have a huge list of new menu items having apprenticed with the great Toshiro.

Special thanks to Renaissance Resort, Berash purveyors, Romar Trading, Heineken beer and Arion Wine Company. □



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	matinee: 1.15				
G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	daily: 4.45		late show:	
	matinee: 12.15	2.30			
R	THE BLIND SIDE	daily: 5.45	8.30	late show: 11.30	
	matinee: 12.00	2.45			
R	NINJA ASSASSIN	daily: 7.00	9.15	late show: 11.45	
	matinee:				
PG	OLD DOGS	daily: 4.15	6.15	8.15	10.15
	matinee: 12.15	2.15	late show: 12.15		
PG-13	2012	daily: 4.45	8.00	late show: 11.15	
	matinee: 1.30				
PG-13	THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	daily: 6.00	9.00	late show: 11.45	
	matinee: 12.15	3.00			

AT PASEO HERENCIA

PG-13	AVATAR 3D	daily: 4.45	8.00	late show: 11.15	NEW
	matinee: 1.30				
PG-13	DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MORGANS?	daily: 6.45	9.00	late show: 11.15	NEW
	matinee:				
PG-13	THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	daily: 5.45	8.45	late show: 11.45	
	matinee: 12.00	3.00			
G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	daily: 4.45		late show:	
	matinee: 12.15	2.30			
PG-13	2012	daily: 5.00	8.15	late show: 11.30	
	matinee: 1.45				
R	KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER	daily: 7.00	9.15	late show: 11.30	
	matinee:				
PG-13	EVERYBODY'S FINE	daily: 4.30			
	matinee: 12.00	2.15	late show:		
R	ARMORED	daily: 5.30	7.45	9.45	
	matinee: 1.00	3.15	late show: 12.00		

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The French Steakhouse delivers dining under the stars



Eagle Beach – The French Steakhouse at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa just added another charming dining option, a tropical outdoor courtyard, featuring delicious cuisine under the

stars.

The famed French Steakhouse prides itself on the elegant dining experience it offers patrons in the fully air-conditioned dining room. Yet recently the idea of adding a garden spot to the existing blueprint began to sprout in the creative mind of Executive Chef George Hoek, and he immediately recruited the landscapers to create the intimate, lovely setting.

The French Steakhouse Ooh-La-La menu is now served indoor and alfresco, featuring creative appetizers, soups, salads, seafood dishes, poultry and the Pièce de Résistance South American & USDA Beef specialties.

Among popular appetizers the chef's Tropical Crab Cakes with pineapple & mango salsa and the Teriyaki Glazed Seared Duck Breast, served with garden greens and balsamic dressing, are real crowd pleasers.

True to the restaurant's French roots, the Onion Soup is a classic, while the Honey Glazed Salmon Salad winks at the exotic East with a sweet soy dressing. The menu features a great variety of seafood dishes from fresh fish to the totally sinful and amazingly-decadent Caribbean Stuffed Shrimp with Crabmeat and Bacon, which became an instant hit. The tequila and sweet chili glaze, lends the Jumbo shrimp a pure taste of heaven!

The French Steakhouse is naturally famous for the South American Churrasco steak, a signature preparation, which now shares the stage with juicy



USDA beef specialties such as NY Sirloin and Filet Mignon.

Light-eaters will find the Jerk Chicken Skewers and the Lemon Herb Broilers very satisfying.

Open seven days a week from 5:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. the French Steakhouse is blessed with the nicest staff and a delightfully renovated dining room with sparkling China, crisp linen, an interesting bread basket, colossal desserts and live jazz on piano with Eddy Samson who is Aruba's best entertainer, and a walking & breathing music encyclopedia, just whistle the tune, and Eddy will produce a symphonic version of your favorite song.

Hungry patrons will appreciate the Ambassador's 5-course menu featuring the run of the menu highlights for just \$34.95 per person. www.manchebo.com steakhouse

Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar reinvents Beach Cuisine



Eagle Beach – Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa is widely recognized as the home of Beach Cuisine.

Executive Chef George Hoek and his culinary team serve a Sun Splashed menu on the ocean front terrace, raising the restaurant to a must-visit, must-try status.

The contemporary menu, lists many favorite dishes from around the world, borrowing inspiration from US, Mexican, Thai, Jamaican, Cuban, Greek and Mediterranean kitchens, all served with a tropical, Caribbean flair.

From Sun-Sational Salads, to Cuban pressed jawbreakers and wraps, mid-day platters also include oversize Beef Burgers, Philly Cheese Steak Sandwiches and Hot Dogs.

The Pega Pega tropical &

frozen cocktail list, with fresh fruit or ice cream smoothies, margaritas, leaves nothing out, including Yellow Birds, Sex daiquiris, coladas and on the Beach and Mudslides,



making a lunch-time brain-freeze, extremely easy to get!

The Pega Pega, one of Aruba oldest beach bars is open on fabulous Eagle Beach, with

unrivaled views, caring, gracious service, and relaxed atmosphere, from 12 noon to 5 p.m. The bar is open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano introduces Menu Turistico



Eagle Beach -- Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano located at the heart of the low-rise hotels at the Manchebo Beach Resort &

Spa, delivers authentic Mediterranean flavors, at a reasonable price.

The restaurant has just introduced Menu Turistico a three-course dinner featuring appetizers, main courses and desserts for just \$19.95, per person, plus 15% service charge.

Patrons may choose between home made soup and Caesar salad, Fettuccini Alfredo, Lasagna Casarecia, Spaghetti alla Bolognese or any favorite pizza with Tiramisu, Cheese Cake or Ice Cream for the sweet finale.

Executive Chef George Hoek is the resort's much-appreciated culinary expert. He was the recent recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by the Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association in collaboration with the Digicel Group. Chef George accepted the Shoco Award, the national award of excellence, and Aruba's top professional decoration, in the tourism industry.

Island media unwrap a giant Christmas present for Aruba: Palm Beach Plaza



PALM BEACH - The long-anticipated opening of what will prove to be Aruba's most diverse shopping and entertainment center, Palm Beach Plaza, took place yesterday afternoon with a gala event showcasing the mall's many shops, activities and attractions. On the evening previous to the official opening, island media was invited for a sneak peek of all that Palm Beach Plaza, located on the Sasaki Highway across from the Acqua project, has to offer.

Mall Manager Alex Otterspeer and Tenant & Marketing Coordinator Indra Stamper played host and hostess along with Developer Ashok Ramshandani as their guests "ohhhed and ahhhed" over the attractive shops now open and the many still to come. The multi-level mall allows for 42 retail stores, a bowling ally, a cinema with 8 theaters, 2 ATM machines, Western Union, well-stocked mini market, 6 retail and snack kiosks, a fun food court with 8 outlets as well as 7 formal restaurants offering a plethora of cuisines, and more than ample parking with valet service if desired.

The elegant center court sports a stage which will host "numerous special events and diversions,"

according to management. The mall offers, on a daily basis, a supervised child care center with activities and videos, and the entertainment space "Fun City," which includes a Kiddie-train, rock climbing wall, electronic game room and a thrill Cable Slide. It is located adjacent to the fun food court housing Churromaina, Chubby Panda, Sciue Sciue, Aladdin Shoarma Express, Beef'ees and Bon Chicken for quick and easy informal dining for the whole family. Those preferring a more traditional restaurant experience can select either indoor or outdoor dining at a choice of Mexican, Mediterranean, and Caribbean eateries with Mama's, Casa Tua, and Kokomo's. Palm Beach Plaza will also host Hoshi, a typical Miami sushi bar, and allow visitors to take a break at Sir James House of Coffee, Mimo's Ice Cream, Tio Pepes Fruit & Cocktail Bar, Havana Cigar & Spirit Bar and Candyland.

Island media was properly impressed with the remarkable selection of shops including trusted names for quality and style such as San Marina Shoes, Nautica, Shivas, Sun Specs, Bennetton, Birkenstock, Penha and Giordano, with many open and ready to receive



shoppers and browsers, such as Panache, Underground, Skechers and Totto. The center will also be home to several vendors and products that are new to Aruba, offering exciting inventories of trendy fashions and accessories never before seen on the island. Completing the line-up of services offered is the Green Door Day Spa & Salon, Tango Tours travel agents, and just in time for the holiday, Post Aruba announced they will be open to send souvenir postcards to those freezing back in northern climes with a very special service; bring in your digital camera and download a shot of the family on Aruba's sunny shores, it will instantly be converted into a legitimate stamp to use on your holiday correspondence.

The final frosting on the cake is the Palm Beach Plaza Select Card, which offers savings and privileges at participating vendors and is valid through December 31, 2010. Looks like becoming a member of the Palm Beach Plaza will not only provide great fun, but smart savings as well. As a new shopping and entertainment center on Aruba, Palm Beach Plaza management demonstrated it was worth the wait. □



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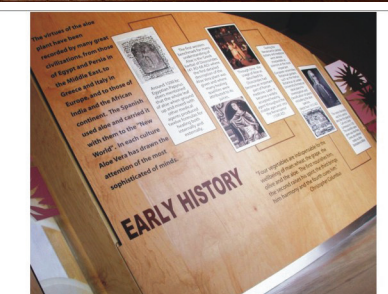
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PALM BEACH – The health and calorie conscious among us need fear steakhouses no more. Whether it's a low-carb, low-fat, or even vegetarian diet you follow, Texas de Brazil Churrascaria fits into just about every dieter's menu plan.

Low carb eaters will have all their expectations surpassed with a tempting carnivorous selection of umpteen cuts of sizzling beef, pork, lamb, sausage, and poultry. The meats are prepared in the healthiest style of cooking—slow roasting—where much of the fat drips off in the roasting process, so those looking for a lower fat option to sautéing, pan frying, or deep frying will also be able to indulge.

The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but **Texas de Brazil's** version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, home-made soups, and much more.

The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to splurge while on vacation, **Texas de Brazil** will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

Restaurant
open daily

Monday - Sat 6 pm - 11
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CRAZY FISH MONDAY @ BUGALOE

Fresh 18oz Snapper or Grouper for only \$ 20

PALM BEACH - Fresher than fresh, is the motto of the popular Bugaloe Beach Bar & Grill at De Palm Pier. Caught in the morning, served at night... That's the Bugaloe way!

Chef Marc Hernandez is proudly presenting his rich platter with an 18oz Red Snapper or Grouper, a choice depending on the catch of that day. "Bugaloe is known for fun and craziness, so it was just a logical step for me to go crazy with this colorful pallet

of exquisite fish, yellow rice and rich vegetables," Chef Marc says. With a smile he adds "And that just for US\$ 20!"

And right he is, as the platter has been a hit from the start. Served with a bottle of white wine this fish feast is truly a delight on your Monday night.

Bugaloe is located at De Palm Pier in Palm Beach between RIU Palace and Radisson Resort.



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OPENING HOURS

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Risk Factors for Heart Disease

You Can Control Many Risk Factors for Heart Disease

**By Lynda Liu**

Six of the major risk factors for heart disease can be modified, treated or controlled. “No one risk factor equals heart disease,” says Alison D. Schecter, M.D., F.A.C.C., an assistant professor at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine and co-director of the Women’s CARE Program. “All are contributory.” By keeping these risk factors in check, you’ll help keep your heart running smoothly and reduce your chances of developing disease.

Smoking

Quite simply, if you smoke, you should quit. “That’s the most incredibly positive thing that someone can do for their health,” says Dr. Schecter. Cigarette smoking is the largest preventable cause of premature death in the U.S. Smokers have a higher chance of developing clogged arteries and in turn, a heart attack.

Cigarette smoking is so hazardous to your heart that it can put a person under 50 years of age at a higher risk for heart disease than someone over 50 years of age. Just 24 hours after kicking the habit, your chance of a heart attack goes down.

High Blood Pressure

Your blood pressure is measured by two numbers. The first, the systolic pressure, is the pressure of your blood flow when your heart beats. The second, the diastolic pressure, is the pressure between heartbeats. Higher blood pressure numbers can mean that blood is having a harder time flowing due to reasons such as narrowed arteries or stiffened vessels.

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that blood pressure in all adults be checked every two years. Your blood pressure should be less than 140/90 mm HG, and less than 130/85 mm HG in people with diabetes, heart failure or renal insufficiency, other stresses on the cardiovascular system.

High Blood Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in fats in your blood and cells. The cholesterol in your body comes from your liver, which produces it, and your diet. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL), also known as the “bad” cholesterol, is the major blood cholesterol. It can build up in your arterial walls, causing vessel-clogging plaques to form. High-density lipoprotein

(HDL), also known as the “good” cholesterol, seems to protect against heart attack by carrying cholesterol away from the arteries.

Total cholesterol and HDL in adults over the age of 20 should be measured at least every five years, according to the American Heart Association. For people without other risk factors, LDL levels should be lower than 200 mg/dL and HDL levels more than 35 mg/dL.

Diet

Eating healthfully can help you avoid high blood cholesterol, reducing your risk of heart disease. Below are the AHA’s dietary recommendations for a healthy person:

Limit fat intake to no more than 30 percent of your total calories; it should break down as follows:

monounsaturated fatty acids — 10 to 15 percent of calories

polyunsaturated fatty acids — 8 to 10 percent of calories

saturated fatty acids and trans fats — less than 10 percent of calories (less than 7 percent if you’ve had a heart attack, have heart disease or have high cholesterol).

Consume less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day.

Consume less than 2,400 milligrams of sodium each day.

Eat no more than three to four egg yolks per week.

Eat six or more servings of breads, cereals, pasta and starchy vegetables each day.

Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

Eat no more than six ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry and fish per day.

Consume two to four servings of fat-free or nonfat milk and low-fat dairy products per day. Consume fats, oils, nuts, seeds and sweets sparingly.

Dr. Dean Ornish, founder, president and director of the Preventive Medicine Research Institute in Sausalito, Calif., Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and a founder of the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine there, has pioneered a program in cardiovascular care based on a combination of low-fat diet, exercise, and stress reduction. His program has significantly reduced cardiovascular symptoms in his patients and is now recognized by major insurance providers around the country.

Physical Activity

A lack of physical activity can more than double your chances of getting heart disease, making a lack of exercise comparable in significance as a risk factor to cigarette smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

To benefit your heart, lungs and circulation, the American Heart Association recommends vigorous exercise three to four times a week for 30 to 60 minutes. One study found that walking on a treadmill at least three hours a week at a brisk pace (three to four miles an hour) cut heart attack and stroke risk by more than half.

Obesity and Overweight

If you’re 20 pounds over your ideal body weight, a

definition of obesity, you’ll be more likely to develop heart disease, even if you have no other risk factors. The excess weight can put a strain on your heart, raise your blood pressure and blood cholesterol and increase your risk of diabetes. Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight will help your heart out — and you’ll feel and look better too.

Diabetes Mellitus

If you have diabetes, it’s extremely important to work with your doctor to keep the disease under control. Diabetes greatly increases your risk of heart disease because it can affect cholesterol and triglyceride levels and makes high blood pressure more likely. Your doctor may recommend dietary changes, an exercise program, weight control or medication.

Psychological Factors

Are you feeling stressed or down? Have you stopped hanging out with friends and family? Believe it or not, psychosocial factors — depression, anxiety, social isolation, low socioeconomic status, and stress — can affect your heart health. The most significant ones are social isolation and depression. “They constitute a risk factor that’s equivalent to high cholesterol or high blood pressure,” says Alan Rozanski, M.D., a professor of medicine at Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons. Furthermore, these risks tend to cluster together. For example, a person who’s isolated tends to be depressed. They’ll also be more likely to have poor lifestyle factors such as a lack of physical activity, smoking, drinking, and poor dietary habits. Here are some tips on beating these heart-defeating risk factors.

Don’t be blue Fifteen percent of heart patients have significant depression and another 15 percent have depressive symptoms. If you’re feeling down, see a health care provider. They may recommend counseling or medication. The important thing is to get help, says Dr. Rozanski, especially because this is an easily treatable risk factor.

Don’t go solo

Surrounding yourself with friends and family is a smart heart decision. One study found that people with a small social network were two to three times more likely to develop coronary artery disease. If you’d like to expand the people you know, join a group of some kind — whether it’s to share a mutual interest or to volunteer.

Slow down

“There are any number of people who can live very busy lives and that’s okay,” says Dr. Rozanski. “But you’ve got to have flexibility and balance.” If you feel that you’re constantly stressed, then you are. It’s important to recognize this and find ways to insert quiet, down time into your busy, harried schedule.

Be like a Buddha

Several studies have shown transcendental meditation to successfully lower high blood pressure, reduce cholesterol levels, and even reverse some hardening of the arteries.

For more information on how to learn TM, visit www.tm.org. □

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1BR	WK 52	ROOM 442 A	P.O.	\$ 17.000
2BR	WK 52	ROOM 128 B/C	P.O.	\$ 25.000
1BR	WK 52	ROOM 137 A	O.V.	\$ 8.000
1BR DLX	WK 51/52	ROOM 219 D	O.V. PW	\$ 8.000
1BR	WK 51/52	ROOM 222 C	P.O. PW	\$ 11.000
1BR	WK 1	ROOM 314 A	P.O.	\$ 9.000
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STU	WK 50/51	ROOM 3214	G.V. PW	\$ 6.000
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STU	WK 52	ROOM 110	P.O.	\$ 11.000
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1BR	WK 51	ROOM 1401	O.V.	\$ 13.000

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Brandweer II	582-1108
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BGD Oranjestad	582-8877

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Pruebas de ADN confirman muerte de capo mexicano de las drogas

CULIACAN, México (AP) - Pruebas genéticas confirmaron que el hombre muerto en un tiroteo con la Armada mexicana era el capo del narcotráfico Arturo Beltrán Leyva, informó el domingo el gobierno mexicano, en momentos en que un velorio lujoso y fuertemente custodiado se realizaba en la capital del estado nortero de Sinaloa. Decenas de soldados del Ejército registraban vehículos cerca de la funeraria de lujo, ubicada en una de las principales avenidas de Culiacán, adonde el cadáver de Beltrán Leyva había llegado la noche del sábado. “Estamos tratando de evitar que lleguen personas armadas al perímetro, revisamos todos los autos”, dijo a The Associated Press



Un miembro de la Marina resguarda la entrada de un complejo de departamentos de lujo en Cuernavaca, México, dic 17 2009. Al enfrentar a cárteles de la droga cada vez más violentos, el presidente mexicano Felipe Calderón está recurriendo a las fuerzas de élite de la Marina del país para reforzar la guerra contra el narcotráfico que encabeza el Ejército. REUTERS/Eliana Aponte

Procuraduría General de la República, determinó positivo dicho parentesco, debido a la coincidencia del linaje paterno entre ambos”, precisó.

Aunque hay otros hermanos en la familia Beltrán Leyva, las autoridades dijeron tener otras evidencias, como fotografías, que permitieron confirmar la identificación del cuerpo, repleto de disparos pero con el rostro básicamente reconocible.

El enfrentamiento en el que murió Arturo Beltrán Leyva, líder del cartel que lleva sus apellidos, ocurrió el miércoles 16 de diciembre en un complejo de apartamentos de lujo en Cuernavaca, la capital del central estado de Morelos, a una hora de viaje de la Ciudad de México. Seis supuestos narcotraficantes y un marino murieron en el tiroteo.

El cuerpo fue reclamado por los familiares de Beltrán Leyva y llevado por avión a Culiacán, en el noroeste de México, para las honras fúnebres. □

Ecuador:

Venezuela dona 5 millones de focos

QUITO (AP) - Una carga con cinco millones de focos ahorradores donados por Venezuela arribó al país el domingo con el fin de ser intercambiados entre la población por bombillas incandescentes y propiciar el ahorro de energía en medio de una crisis que obligó a efectuar racionamientos de luz, se informó oficialmente.

Un comunicado del ministerio de Electricidad señaló que se trata de 67 contenedores que contienen cada uno 77.440 focos ahorradores. Añadió que el lunes está previsto un acto oficial “para recibir la donación” con la presencia de autoridades. Las bombillas serán reemplazadas entre aproximadamente tres millones de familias de los sectores más humildes del país, donde se estima un consumo de hasta 300 kilovatios hora al mes, indicó el reporte.

Un foco incandescente consume hasta 100 vatios, mientras el foco ahorrador alcanza los 20. La campaña de sustitución de bombillas inició a finales de noviembre con medio millón de focos adquiridos en el mercado local.

Desde inicios de noviembre, Ecuador afronta un déficit en la generación eléctrica debido a la sequía en una zona austral donde se ubica la mayor central hidroeléctrica del país y que normalmente abastece el 35% de la demanda local.

La situación obligó al régimen a implementar cortes de luz que actualmente son de tres horas y media en todo el país. □

un militar que no quiso dar su nombre. “Toda la noche ha estado tranquila”, agregó. Una muestra de tejido tomada al cadáver de Beltrán Leyva, alias “El Barbas” y “El jefe de jefes”, fue comparada con muestras de su hermano

Alfredo, encarcelado desde enero del 2008.

Así, se confirmó su parentesco biológico, informó la fiscalía federal mexicana en un comunicado. “El resultado del dictamen, emitido por peritos de la

FARC no están acabadas, dice ministro de Defensa colombiano

BOGOTA (AP) - El ministro de Defensa Gabriel Silva aseguró que las guerrillas de las FARC no están ni agonizando, ni terminadas y que Colombia tiene vulnerabilidades serias de seguridad frente a eventuales agresiones externas.

Silva, en una entrevista publicada el domingo por el diario El Tiempo, aseguró que si bien las rebeldes Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) han sufrido en los últimos años, debido a la acción oficial, un deterioro de su capacidad operativa, no están agonizando.

“No, ni agonizando ni terminadas”, dijo el ministro al ser consultado sobre el estatus de las FARC.

Silva dijo que recientemente entregó un informe técnico militar y de carácter reservado al congreso planteando temas sobre las estrategias de defensa del país y en el que incluyó el punto de una eventual

agresión armada externa a Colombia.

“Venezuela ha invertido miles de millones de dólares en armas cuando la gente está llena de necesidades. En Colombia estamos concentrados en la amenaza interna, pero ha aparecido el riesgo, porque así se ha planteado de manera muy directa y muy clara, de una eventual acción externa contra Colombia. Sería irresponsable de nuestra parte no informarle al congreso sobre esa situación”, señaló.

El ministro, sin embargo, aseguró que en Colombia “no entraremos jamás en una carrera armamentista” así como que “no se trata de prepararse para una agresión”. Silva indicó que se trata de “un informe técnico que suscribo en el sentido de que tenemos vulnerabilidades serias frente a eventuales agresiones externas” y de las cuales no dio detalles. □

Chávez:

Avión espía EEUU violó espacio aéreo venezolano

CARACAS (AP) - El presidente Hugo Chávez dijo el domingo que un avión estadounidense no tripulado violó hace poco el espacio aéreo venezolano y que ordenó a las fuerzas armadas que derribaran cualquier aeronave de ese tipo si esto vuelve a suceder.

Chávez aseguró en su programa de radio dominical que el avión

espía sobrevoló una base militar en el estado occidental del Zulia luego de despegar desde la vecina Colombia.

El presidente no dio más detalles, pero dejó entrever que considera que Estados Unidos estaba usando el avión para espiar a Venezuela. Chávez ha acusado a Colombia de permitir que Estados Unidos use bases



El presidente venezolano, Hugo Chávez, durante una rueda de prensa sobre el calentamiento global en Copenhague, dic 18 2009. REUTERS/Christian Charisius

en ese país para preparar una posible agresión militar contra Venezuela. Tanto Colombia

como Estados Unidos niegan esas acusaciones. Funcionarios estadounidenses

respondieron a las declaraciones de Chávez de inmediato el domingo. □

Conmemoran 20 años de invasión de EEUU a Panamá

PANAMA (AP) - Un puñado de panameños protestó pacíficamente el domingo contra Estados Unidos al conmemorarse el vigésimo aniversario de la invasión militar estadounidense a Panamá.

La protesta en la que participaron unas 100 personas obstaculizó parcialmente el tránsito vehicular y tuvo lugar frente a un antiguo edificio que otrora fue sede de la embajada de Estados Unidos.

La manifestación fue organizada por el Frente Nacional de Defensa de los Derechos Económicos y Sociales (Frenadeso). La organización, que aglutina a sectores magisteriales, de derechos humanos, trabajadores y universitarios, lamentó que a dos décadas de la acción militar aún se desconoce cuántos panameños murieron. □



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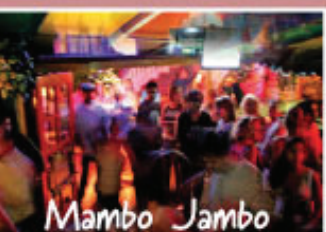
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